

# PFLAG-T: Pulses

September/October 1997

## NAME THE NEWSLETTER (PLEASE!)

If your creative juices are pulsing please send your suggestion(s) for a new name for our PFLAG-T Edmonton newsletter to:

Newsletter Editor

OR phone [REDACTED] Your contributions are very much appreciated.

## MEETINGS

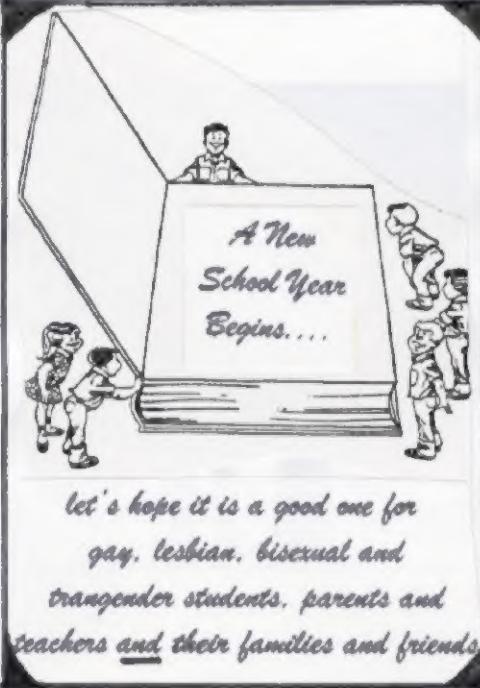
### September Business Mtg

Tuesday, Sept 9\*, 1997

10612 - 124 St.

Suite 103 7:00pm

\*Please note that for this one month only our business meeting will be held on the second, instead of the first, Tuesday of the month as several committee members will be cooking brunch on Sept 1, 1997 at the Great Alberta Campout.



### Sept & Oct Support Mtgs

Tues, Sept 16 & Oct 21/97

10612 - 124 St

Suite 103 7:30 pm

### Annual General Mtg

Tuesday, October 7, 1997

10612 -124 St., Suite 103

7:00 pm

Everyone welcome! Why should I attend? To support

and continue the work of PFLAG-T Edmonton. That is,

- to help families and their gay/lesbian/bisexual/trans gender members to love and understand one another; to offer mutual support wherever needed;
- to invite others to share knowledge, to be free from fear and to reach out, search and discover more about their children/family member/neighbor/coworker/student/client;
- to educate the public about the nature of sexual orientation and gender identity so that we may all live in an enlightened society that is respectful of human diversity.

## WALKIN' IN THE RAIN

Over 500 lesbian, bisexual, gay and transgender people and their supporters - e.g. parents and friends -walked in a pouring rain on Edmonton's Gay Pride Day, June 21, 1997 to proclaim not

Please share this newsletter

only the fact that they exist but that they are proud of the sexual orientation and/or gender identity with which they were born. The parents and friends who walked with them have incredible admiration and pride for the strength and patient endurance their loved ones evince in the face of those who, out of fear of "difference", lack of knowledge, or for political gain, have a need to persecute those who are different in any way from themselves.

**In Halifax, Nova Scotia,** over 800 walked in a relatively quiet parade. However in **Toronto, Ontario** 600,000 persons celebrated in a more ebullient walk. In **Vancouver's tenth Gay Pride parade** Police Chief Bruce Chambers walked front and centre with a group of openly gay police officers and received loud approval from the thousands gathered there. "One of the reasons I'm here today is to show that we'll continue to work in a positive manner to build trust with all members of society," Chief Chambers said.

It is PFLAG-T's hope that one day all police forces in Canada will offer protection, especially to the frequently gay-bashed youth in our schools and on our streets.

## ALBERTA NEWS

### Church Leader Attacks Alberta Government for Anti-Gay Stand

(Courtesy The Edmonton Journal, 18 August, 1997)

The newly elected moderator of the United Church of Canada says he won't let up lobbying the Alberta government to recognize gays.

Rev. Bill Phipps of Calgary, who was elected the church's 36th moderator Sunday in Camrose, said the term "absolutely paranoid" doesn't begin to describe the Alberta government's stance on gay rights.

"The church has been lobbying the Alberta government for years to put gay rights into legislation. It's absolute nonsense."

### Vriend Firing Set for High Court Hearing

(Courtesy The Edmonton Journal, August, 1997)

The Supreme Court of Canada has set aside Nov. 4 and 5 to hear the case of an Edmonton lab instructor who was fired from King's College for being homosexual.

Delwin Vriend has been contesting his firing in 1991, and contends the Christian private college fired him because of his homosexuality.

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In April 1994, Court of Queen's Bench Justice Anne Russell ruled in favour of Vriend saying "discrimination against homosexuals is a historical, universal, notorious and indisputable social reality."

She ruled the province must include sexual orientation in its individual rights legislation.

But instead of changing the law, the government appealed to the Alberta Court of Appeal, which struck down Russell's decision in February 1996.

In October, Vriend and Gay and Lesbian Awareness of Edmonton received leave to appeal.

"This has been a very lengthy and expensive battle for fundamental human rights against the Klein government's antiquated position," said GALA director Murray Billet.

"The P.E.I. (and Newfoundland) government(s) have recently indicated they will move to include sexual orientation in their provincial legislation. This will leave Alberta as the only province in the country to continue on its discriminatory path of inequality."

### Albertans Think for Themselves, Thanks

(Courtesy The Edmonton Journal,  
20 Aug. 1997)

Stockwell Day's preoccupation nears persecution:

Wendy Martindale wandered through the Red Deer Farmer's Market last Saturday, preparing herself for an encounter with a homophobic bigot amid the peas and carrots.

She wasn't worried. She expected blunt questions. She had answers in mind.

If the worst happened, she was ready for the garden-variety prejudice that grows like pigweed in Alberta's ditches. She practised her calm reply.

To her surprise, many strangers and acquaintances stopped her to express support for the courage of the Red Deer and District Museum. Many congratulated the museum director for refusing to buckle to the political interference of provincial treasurer Stockwell Day and Tory MLA Victor Doerksen.

The two Red Deer politicians vehemently oppose a research project on gay history in central Alberta. They've asked the museum to return a \$10,000 lottery grant, and they've convinced Culture

Minister Shirley McLellan to review the jury's decision. (McLellan has since reviewed this matter and decided that any interference with decisions of the Alberta Museum Board would be inappropriate.)

Speaking on behalf of every man, woman, child and household pet in Red Deer, Day and Doerksen insist the gay-history project offends the city's traditional values.

Albertans have a delicious habit of speaking for themselves.

Plenty of Red Deer citizens called Martindale at her home on the weekend to contradict Day and Doerksen, and to support the museum's autonomy. If anything offended them, it was the two politician's casual assumption that everyone in Red Deer shared the same values and prejudices.

**'One lady in her 60's said to me, "I have a son who is gay, and we are proud of him in this family. People don't realize that when they condemn gays, they are condemning their own family members and their own friends in this community.'**

Returning to work on Monday, Martindale had to abandon her plan to work on the museum's budget. Her

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telephone wouldn't stop ringing.

"One gentleman called and said, 'My wife and I think you should research anything you damn well please.' "

A California man called long-distance to say that he'd read about the dispute in a Vancouver newspaper, that he'd grown up in Red Deer as a homosexual and left because of prejudice in the community. Like the offended mother, he urged the museum to proceed with the project....

Stockwell Day's preoccupation with homosexuality is beginning to amount to a persecution campaign. Premier Ralph Klein could distance himself from this ugliness with one unequivocal public statement. The province could ban discrimination against gays, specifically in Alberta's human rights legislation, as eight of the 10 provinces already do in good conscience.

Instead Klein chooses to kowtow to bigots. To borrow a chilling Stockwellian phrase, he "legitimizes a lifestyle choice that doesn't deserve this kind of attention."

If only Alberta's premier had the courage of a certain museum in Red Deer, the courage to stand up against a

cruel impulse and stare it down.

### CANADIAN NEWS

#### Newfoundland

(Courtesy Gale Force, June/97)

The government of Newfoundland is taking steps to prepare legislation to add sexual orientation to its Human Rights Act. The plan is for the legislation to be introduced when the Newfoundland House resumes sitting after the summer recess. If passed, this will bring gays and lesbians closer to universal human rights protection across Canada. A number of groups and individuals in Newfoundland have been very busy working on this project and are making a presentation to the whole of the Newfoundland Liberal caucus the end of May.

#### York, Ontario

(Courtesy *The Rainbow Classroom*, Spring/97)

#### **City of York Board of Education Creeps Out of the Closet**

The City of York Board of Education, not to be confused with York Region, East York or North York, is nestled between the cities of Toronto, Etobicoke and North York. Our 20,000 students are the most ethnically diverse population in Canada. Our

income is the lowest in the GTA(Greater Toronto Area). We have the highest percentage of residents whose mother tongue is not English and the highest percentage in the GTA of people with a grade 8 education or less. We are an immigrant reception area. Our Adult Day School is proportionately the biggest in Metro. Our student population is a needy one.

In the area of gay and lesbian issues we are still in the dark ages, though we are making progress. Since being elected as the Board's first openly gay trustee, we have struggled with an uphill battle but we have had some victories along the way:

- the Board's sexual harassment policy and literature was changed to include sexual orientation;
- a motion was passed to ensure that future surveys of harassment in the Board would specifically ask about harassment based on sexual orientation;
- a gay and lesbian teachers group has been formed;
- *It's Elementary*, a film about the treatment of gay and lesbian issues in elementary school, has been added to the Board's teacher

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professional development;

- the race relations committee has included in their professional development materials references to sexual orientation; and
- I took a male date to the Board's employee dinner dance and danced (to songs of various tempos).

There is still a long, long way to go but the journey has begun.

*Carl Miller is a Trustee and Vice Chair of the City of York Board of Education*

#### Toronto, Ontario

#### Equity Conference

(Courtesy *The Rainbow Classroom*)

On May 8-9/97 a two-day conference was held for teachers and planners in primary and secondary schools, community colleges and universities, who are implementing equality and inclusiveness in the classroom and the curriculum. . . in addition to the many workshops dealing with equity issues in general, the following workshops focused on lesbian, gay and bisexual school issues:

- **Addressing Sexual Orientation in the Schools: A workshop**

presenting a framework for dealing with sexual orientation in the school system. - examines the importance of a three-level approach involving student support services, curriculum and professional development.

- **It's Elementary: Addressing Issues of Sexual Orientation in Elementary Schools:** A two-part workshop exploring the unspoken taboos around sexual orientation. In Part I, participants will view *It's Elementary*, a new documentary about gay/lesbian/bisexual issues. In Part II, participants will discuss and analyze the video, and develop practical strategies for confronting homophobia and heterosexism in K-8 schools.
- **The Triangle Experience:** A presentation describing and explaining the history, nature and program experiences of Ontario's first secondary school transitional program for alienated and at risk lesbian, bisexual and gay youth.

#### **British Columbia**

Out lesbian Mary-Woo Sims has recently (Jan./ 1997) been

appointed Chief Commissioner of the British Columbia Human Rights Commission. Sims, from Toronto, has been one of that city's most prominent lesbian activists.

#### **Same-sex Couples Win Legal Status**

(Courtesy The Edmonton Journal, 23 July, 1997)

The B.C. legislature passed a law Tuesday giving same-sex couples legal status when it comes to their children.

**The Family Relations Amendment Act and the Family Maintenance Enforcement Act** make British Columbia the first Canadian province to ensure homosexual couples have the same privileges and responsibilities for child support, access and custody as heterosexual couples.

Earlier, British Columbia passed a law allowing same-sex couples to adopt.

#### **INTERNATIONAL NEWS**

##### **"Conversion" of Gays Rejected by Meeting**

(Courtesy The Edmonton Journal, 15 August, 1997)

The largest society of psychologists in the United States passed a resolution Thursday aimed at discrediting the controversial

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practice of using therapy to try to change the sexual orientation of homosexuals.

**The American Psychological Association's action** - passed on a show of hands by a 106 to 4 vote - would mean its membership of 150,000 psychologists would be breaching ethical guidelines should they tell potential clients that there is effective "reparative" or "conversion" therapy for the treatment of homosexuality. The organization has publicly endorsed treatment guidelines from the American Psychiatric Association stating that homosexuality is not a mental illness.

#### **FROM THE BOOKSHELF**

##### **True Selves - Understanding Transsexualism (Transgenderism)**

Mildred Brown and Chloe Rounseley have written a book that combines authoritative information with compassionate insight into the transsexual experience. Filled with wisdom and understanding, this ground breaking guide paints a vivid portrait of the myriad conflicts transsexuals face on a daily basis and the courage they must summon to reveal their true essence to themselves and others.

Parents from PFLAG-T highly recommend this book

not only for its readability but for how well it describes issues for parents, family members, coworkers and professionals (including medical, educational and social-work professionals). The following excerpt from *True Selves* eloquently illustrates this point:

**"How could You Choose to Do This . . ?"**

After working with many families over the years, it has become clear that one of the most important things for loved ones to recognize about transsexualism is that it is not a choice. People have no more control over gender dysphoria than they do over their height, bone structure, or skin color. The only choice they have with regard to their gender conflict is whether to take actions to ease it and, if so, which actions.

When people realize that transsexuals are well aware that they may conceivably lose their family, their friends, their jobs, and their savings, they are less likely to think that transsexuals have any choice about the matter.

Why would anyone voluntarily do something that would turn his or her life upside down and inside out? who, after all, would choose transsexualism knowing full well how costly it is going to

be emotionally, physically, socially, and financially?

A sentiment every one of my transsexual patients has expressed at one time or another is, "No one would ever choose to be born this way" or "I wouldn't wish this on anyone."

Although transsexuals don't have a choice about their condition (i.e. gender identity\*) the important thing to remember is that family members, friends, and coworkers *do have a choice* about how they react and respond to transsexualism (or any other shocking news, for that matter). There is no one way to respond to an emotional blow. Remaining angry, ashamed, hurt and depressed and banishing the transsexual is a choice *you* may make for yourself, but others may choose to deal with transsexualism in different and healthier ways (as demonstrated in Chapter Eight).

Remember, transsexualism doesn't have to ruin or destroy relationships or break up families. Some aspects of the transsexual and the relationship may change, but that doesn't mean that they have to change for the worse.

\*It should be noted that neither you, the reader, nor myself, nor anyone throughout history has been able to choose their gender identity, i.e. anatomical male/

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psychological male; anatomical male/ psychological female; anatomical female/ psychological female; or anatomical female/ psychological male.

*True Selves - Understanding Transsexualism* is available (two copies) at the Edmonton Public Library or from Orlando Books.

### **People Are Not Always as They Appear**

(Courtesy *Edmontonians*, July / 1997 by Muggsy Forbes)

Alley Kat Brewing, for some obscure reason, always asks me to their media events . . . I spotted a lady leaning against the bar, dressed in a charming red satin blouse and a leather mini skirt. Alley Kats partner . . . said she was an award-winning brewmaster. All this was fine, but after I introduced myself, she turned out to be a he. Roxanne sharply corrected me. She is not a crossdresser, but transgendered, and she's comfortable in whatever personality role she chooses. Roxanne functions in public as both male and female . . . she works as a research scientist during the day, and in the evening functions however s/he feels. By the way Roxanne's beers have won 50 awards at the 1996 Canadian Amateur Brewers Assoc. Here she won Best of Show. Editors Note: Roxanne is also PFLAG-T's invaluable transgender representative. Way to go Roxanne!

# It's a Parent's Life!

september/october 1997

## MOTHERS' STORIES:

### NEW YORK SHOW & CD HONOR MY LATE SON BILL

(Courtesy the PFLAG Olympia Heartbeat, July/August, 1997)

by Gabi Clayton

On June 26, 1996, almost a year ago, I checked my e-mail and found a letter from a songwriter in Los Angeles, Steve Schalchlin. He had visited my home page on the Internet, and he invited me to visit his. Thus began an incredible friendship.

When I met Steve in that letter, he was coming back from very near death from AIDS. He was taking Crixivan, and as that medicine worked what could be called a miracle, Steve found the energy to write new songs. He wanted to tell his relatives and friends what it is like to live with AIDS.

As Steve's strength came back, the songs flowed from him. His partner, Jim Brochu, then wrote an incredibly powerful book (play) that wraps itself around those

songs. The result is *The Last Session* (or TLS), a brand



new musical.

Last December Steve released a CD called "Living in the Bonus Round." He surprised me by dedicating it to the memory of two people - my son Bill, who committed suicide when he was 17 after he was assaulted in a hate crime, and Shawn Decker, a 21 year old straight hemophiliac, HIV +ve since he was 11.

*The Last Session* opened at the Currican Theater in New

York May 8, (1997) the second anniversary of Bill's suicide. An odd coincidence!

A wonderful friend of Steve's and mine flew me there. It was his surprise to Steve and his gift to me, he wrote, "an expression of my gratitude for your struggle against intolerance and my appreciation for your love and support for Bill. Consider it a Mother's Day present from him."

My son Noel and I flew to New York May 9, the day after *The Last Session* opened, for a wonderful Mother's Day weekend, one I will never forget.

About his show, Steve wrote this letter to "PFLAG Talk," the unofficial cyberspace PFLAG chapter.

*"I wrote the songs about Christian homophobia and about AIDS. I came from an ultra-conservative background in the south, son of a Baptist preacher, and had to work through a lot of prejudice, self-loathing and*

guilt before I grew into the person I am today.

*When I thought I had little time left, I began a web page with an on-line diary. This opened a new world for me, especially after I found "Bill's Story" on Gabi Clayton's site. The image of that beautiful child's now-gone face beaming out from her site haunted me for weeks. I'm proud that I helped make his full story available to the world.*

*In addition, I began to meet countless young gay kids stuck in fundamentalist homes in fundamentalist towns with fundamentalist preachers - kids with blades to their wrists.*

*I began to really see the horror of many of today's organized religions and the hate they perpetuate on those they pretend to love. I am not a religion basher, but I judge any and all by the way they treat other people, especially children.*

**"I salute all the parents who have had the courage to go against modern hate and inborn prejudices, to see through to the light of love and joyful acceptance of their gay kids."**

*You cannot imagine the thrill that goes through my heart when I see how lovingly devoted you are."*

The script is intense, funny and heart-breaking. The five characters express so very much of the passion, pain, joy, fear and hope of this world. Especially hope.

Sitting in the theater next to Noel, listening to Steve's songs, there were times when Noel reached for my hand and we just held on. I found the show to be a powerful statement for love and hope, and against hatred and ignorance.

When Steve dedicated his CD to Bill's memory, I was blown away. Now that I have seen *The Last Session*, I cannot imagine any way his memory could be more honored. During the trip home, Noel said, "Mom, you have some pretty amazing friends." I agree!

#### ***Rejecting Gay Son's Lover a Terrible Mistake***

(Courtesy Ann Landers, The Edmonton Journal, July 9, 1997)

I was raised a strict Catholic and refused to accept my gay son's lover for many years. I was adamant about barring him from all family functions. This caused problems and unpleasant confrontations for a long time.

Last year, I became ill and could no longer live alone. My gay son and his lover

## **It's a Parent's Life!**

were the only ones in the family who offered to take me in. I was resistant at first, but after living with them for a few months, I realized that the love and compassion which held their relationship together for so many years was every bit as valid as that of any heterosexual couple.

I am angry with myself for the heartache and trouble I put them through. I still cannot understand why God made them gay. I only know that He brought together these two wonderful people - my son and my "son-in-law." I just hope your advice will make other parents think before they make the dreadful mistakes I did.

Proud mother in California

#### **A FATHER'S ADVICE**

(Courtesy PFLAG Olympia HeartBeat, July/August, 1997)

by Bob Hill

I once thought I was doing everything correctly - until I went to a PFLAG meeting. I encourage other men to come for the first and second time, to open up and share, experience growth as I did. Emerge from the comfort of your mental cave, grow, and make a difference.

Co-Chair, PFLAG Bellevue